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THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A Theoretical Foundation for Understanding Clergy-Perpetrated Sexual Abuse

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ABSTRACT. Incorporating elements from broadband theories of psychological adaptation to extreme adversity, including Summit's (1983) Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome, Finkelhor and Browne's (1986) Traumagenic Dynamics Model of sexual abuse, and Pyszczynski and colleagues' (1997) Terror Management Theory, this paper proposes a unified theoretical model of clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse for future research. The model conceptualizes clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse as the convergence of interactive processes between the clergy-perpetrator, the parishioner-survivor, and the religious community.

KEYWORDS. Sexual abuse, clergy, theory, trauma, terror management, community

Now in accordance with the Canons, you have been selected to serve God in [this] Church. This . . . is a sign that you are fully empowered and authorized to exercise this ministry, accepting its privileges and responsibilities as a priest of this Diocese, in communion with your Bishop. . . . Having committed yourself to this work, do not forget the trust of those who have chosen you. Care alike for young and old, strong and weak, rich and poor. (The Episcopal Church, 1979, p. 557)

Clergy-perpetrated sexual abuse (CPSA) has been deemed the "worst crisis" in the Catholic Church's American history and the late Pope John Paul II's papacy (Paulson, 2005). More than 10,000 allegations of CPSA were made by Catholic parishioners between 1950–2002, with 81% of survivors being male and more than 40% of all survivors being boys aged 11–14 (The John Jay College Research Team, 2004). The Associated Press (2005) reported that settlements between the Catholic Church and survivors have exceeded \$1 billion. Although the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church has received the majority of recent media attention, it is not the only Christian denomination or religious group to encounter this problem. CPSA has also been discussed in the Episcopal (Richards, 2004), Protestant (Disch & Avery, 2001; Fortune, 1989), Buddhist (Simpkinson, 1996), and Jewish faiths ("Jewish Sexual Abuse," n.d; see also Neustein & Lesher, 2008).

Efforts to understand CPSA and its effects have been largely based in qualitative interview studies of survivors (Bera, 1995; Flynn, 2000; Fortune, 1989; Isely, 1996; also see Isely, Isley, Freiburger, & McMackin, 2008; Flynn, 2008). These studies underscore links between CPSA and what is known about other forms of sexual abuse, especially the sexual abuse of

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children (e.g., Farrell & Taylor, 2000; Isely & Isely, 1990). CPSA and other forms of sexual abuse appear to share similar relational dynamics between survivors and perpetrators and similar psychological consequences, including symptoms of simple and complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; see Herman, 1992; Kohlenberg & Tsai, 1998). It is well established that sexual abuse can have long-term negative consequences, including chronic depression, self-destructive behavior, isolation, damaged sense of self-esteem and trust in others, substance abuse, anxiety, anger, and aggression (Allers, Benjack, & Allers 1992; Gagnon & Hersen, 2000). In addition to the similarities with other forms of abuse, Farrell and Taylor (2000) and McLaughlin (1994) noted that symptoms of spiritual and theological crisis during and after the abuse set CPSA apart from other forms of sexual abuse and therefore advocated that it be studied as a separate entity.

Having a theoretical foundation for understanding CPSA is the first step toward developing and testing effective interventions for survivors, perpetrators, and religious communities. We are not the first to make this argument. A special issue of *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* (Frawley O'Dea & Goldner, 2004) was devoted to analyzing the problem of CPSA from a theoretical perspective, and a growing number of writers have strongly advocated for methodologically rigorous work in this area (e.g., McGlone, 2003). Unfortunately, no comprehensive theoretical framework exists for understanding the complex set of interrelationships between perpetrators, survivors, and their communities. We propose to review some possible ways of conceptualizing the phenomenon of CPSA. We seek to stimulate future hypothesis-driven clinical research into CPSA by providing a discussion of a few applicable (and we believe, testable) theoretical models derived from research into other forms of sexual abuse, as well as CPSA.

OVERVIEW AND DISCLAIMER

From our review of the literature, we believe that CPSA and its psychological consequences can best be conceptualized as an *interactive dynamic process* between perpetrators, survivors, and religious communities. CPSA by definition includes a clergyperson's inappropriate sexual advances and behavior, but it also includes the cultivation of a relationship in which these behaviors occur, the theological and community context surrounding this usually secret and forbidden relationship, and the impact and psychological aftershock of abusive behavior on the survivor and community. These relational processes have direct and delayed

effects that are not easily analyzed in aggregate but can be studied at the individual or subgroup level. By reducing the model into smaller, more testable parts, the complexity of CPSA can begin to be explored.

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As an interactive dynamic process, CPSA includes three broad, overlapping thematic categories: (a) the abusive relationship between the perpetrator and the survivor, (b) the relationship between the survivor and the larger community upon disclosure of the abuse, and (c) the relationship between the clergyperson and the community once the clergyperson has been identified as an alleged perpetrator. This view is congruent with Goldner's (2004) conceptualization of CPSA as a story told from the perspectives of the victim/survivor, the professional/clergy, and the "bystander" (family member, community, etc.), but we attempt to go one step further by highlighting what could be empirically studied mechanisms and inferred "cause-effect" relationships within this fluid, interactive narrative. These mechanisms are derived from the existing literature on sexual abuse more generally, and we hope to create a base on which a theory of CPSA can be built that also highlights some of the unique aspects of this traumatic experience. From this point forward, we will refer to the three core interactive processes as themes and discuss the mechanisms we believe are present in each core theme. Additionally, we realize the perpetrator in CPSA can be either a man or woman from any faith orientation, yet for this paper we will generally refer to the clergy perpetrator as a "clergyman" as the predominant number of cases of CPSA involves men as the perpetrators.

We acknowledge that our discussion is a biased one in that we have chosen a selection of theoretical elements that fit our conceptual prejudices. For example, we draw heavily from Summit's (1983) writing about the Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome (CSAAS), which addresses the question of what dynamics trap children in sexually abusive relationships, and Isely and Isely's (1990) application of Summit's model to CPSA in adult survivors. Such broadly inclusive models are appealing in that they discuss dynamics that we believe are applicable to both child and adult survivors of CPSA. We focus in particular on the clergyman's direct abuse of his trusted position. We also draw from the highly influential Traumagenic Dynamics Model (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986), which subsumes the disparate reactions of sexually traumatized children under four thematic categories: (a) traumatic sexualization, (b) stigmatization, (c) betrayal, and (d) powerlessness. Each theme has three subcomponents: dynamics, psychological impact, and behavioral manifestations. Not all CPSA survivors will manifest dynamics and behaviors for every theme, but the model's wide scope maximizes the likelihood of conceptualizing the survivor's behavior.

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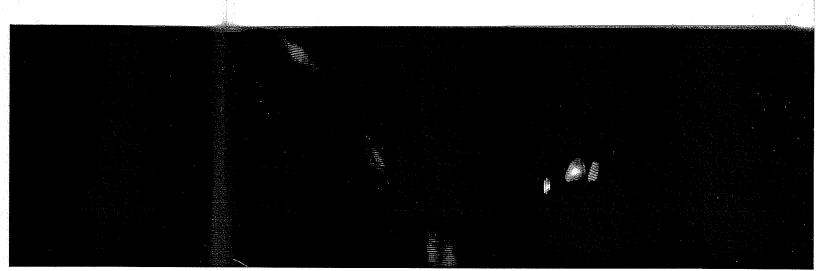
We expect that by sketching a broad but empirically informed model we will be able to capture the complexities and nuances of CPSA. However, we stress that this article is in no way intended to be the "final word" on CPSA. Rather, it is our hope that future researchers will either add to or amend our initial model as more data become available.

THEME 1: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PERPETRATORS AND SURVIVORS

The first theme is represented by four primary mechanisms that shape the relationship between perpetrator and survivor. These mechanisms are: the abuse of clerical power, the use of God to leverage the abusive relationship, the relationship's impact on self-concept, and the role of predatory clergy. Each mechanism is discussed with considerations for future research.

Perpetrators and Survivors: The Abuse of Clerical Power to Sexually Exploit Others

The dynamics of sexual misconduct and abuse between helping professionals and their clients (e.g., Disch & Avery, 2001; Penfold, 1999) provides a helpful starting point. Except in extreme cases of violent rape and sexual intimidation using quid-pro-quo tactics, it can be difficult to recognize the abusive quality of sexually inappropriate relationships between clergy and adult parishioners. At first glance, some may say that these relationships have more in common with developmentally appropriate romantic relationships or affairs. For example, Francis and Turner (1995) distinguished adult women parishioners whose "admiration for a pastor develops into sexual feelings" (p. 218) as a separate category from those who seem to act out past sexual trauma or other psychopathology or who enter a sexual relationship while seeking counsel during such highly vulnerable periods as marital or other personal crises. However, the inherent power of the pastoral role has important repercussions that transcend these subdivisions of relationship. As evidence, the literature in this area suggests that many abusive dynamics are present in "consenting" adult relationships between people of unequal power. Glaser and Thorpe (1986) surveyed female psychology graduate students who entered into sexual relationships with their academic advisors and observed a statistically significant shift from an initially positive or neutral view of the relationship to a negative one over time. In addition, Penfold's (1999) qualitative



study of women who were involved in sexually exploitative relationships with either a licensed medical or mental health professional or member of the clergy produced findings that were remarkably similar to findings from the previously described qualitative research on CPSA. The women in Penfold's study initially felt special to be "singled out" by the counselor for such an intimate relationship but over time felt increasingly exploited and developed clinically significant symptoms of depression, anxiety, and somatization. Thus, qualitative data demonstrate support for the hypothesis that there is an abusive quality to these relationships.

Despite the abusive quality of someone with authority and power gaining access to a survivor through their unique standing in the community, many survivors express ambivalence about filing a complaint against the abuser. To understand this situation, theoretical models such as the CSAAS (Summit, 1983) are enlightening. Dynamics such as "entrapment and accommodation" are very well described. In this dynamic, the sexually abused person internalizes a false sense of control over the abuse experiences and believes that if he or she can just learn how to be "good" in the perpetrator's eyes, the victim can reduce the abuse's frequency, if not avoid it altogether, and maybe even elicit the perpetrator's positive attention and behavior. Similarly, Simpkinson (1996) described how adult women were convinced by their Buddhist teacher that they could "only achieve enlightenment by serving the sexual and other needs of their enlightened master" (p. 3).

The abuse of power is most often discussed in cases of incest, which we believe has direct application to CPSA. For example, some Christian denominations call priests "Father," which has symbolic meaning for describing the priest's role in the community. Herman and Hirschman (1977, 1981) and others (Courtois, 1988; Goodwin, Cormier, & Owen, 1983; Russell, 1986) discuss how father-daughter, brother-sister, uncleniece, and grandfather-granddaughter incest frequently occurs in highly patriarchal societies in which fathers have unquestioned authority. Male perpetrators of incestuous abuse often enforce their will through domestic violence and "family tyranny" (Herman, 1993). Summit (1983) wrote that when survivors are chronically overwhelmed in this manner by their perpetrators, both physically and emotionally, a common reaction is internalized helplessness. This reaction may be especially likely to occur in cases in which the perpetrator is an authority figure with whom the survivor has a close, dependent, and often isolated relationship.

Mirroring the findings related to incest, Franz (2002) and Rossetti (1995) described how sexual exploitation may be facilitated by the patriarchal structure of Christian faiths and the exalted role of priests and

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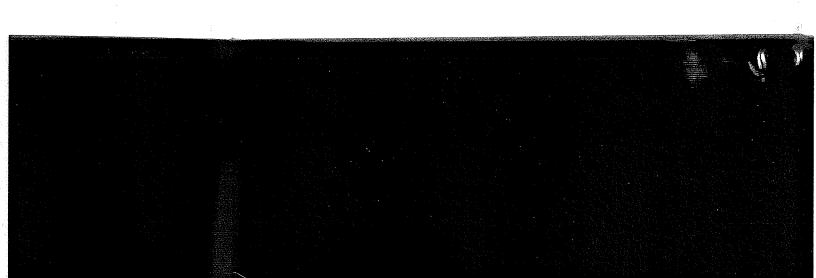
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Franz (2002) and Rossetti y be facilitated by the patriexalted role of priests and ministers (see also McGlone, 2003; Richards, 2004). In Christian faiths (and one could argue all of the world's dominant monotheistic religions), the pastor's leadership and love of his church and congregation are proxy for the leadership and love of God. Whether a clergyman counsels a congregant or suggests a plan for the church's growth and development, the wisdom and correctness of his decisions are understood to stem from the depth of his spiritual connection. Within this context, a survivor may believe that to deny a perpetrating clergyman's advances is to deny the wishes and moral authority of God. This basic formulation holds whether the survivor is an adult or a child. For example, Fortune (1989) compellingly wrote about the confusion of one congregant when she was approached by her pastor to enter a sexual relationship in secret:

Was her pastor's suggestion appropriate? Was it ethical? Was it right for her? She realized that she had missed the emotional and sexual intimacy she had shared with her husband, and she longed to have that again. [She] shared her hesitation and questions with [her pastor]. He was her pastor and she trusted and respected him. As she wavered, [the pastor] reassured her: It was perfectly acceptable; she should know that he would not suggest anything that was not for her well-being. (p. 20, our emphases)

Dynamics such as traumatic sexualization, secrecy, and powerlessness highlight the discrepancy between the powerful clergyman and the less powerful adult parishioner. This dynamic could be exacerbated in the case of children. Finkelhor and Browne (1986) described how children internalize a false sense of control over abusive experiences, and children in incestuous relationships are often placed in the developmentally inappropriate role of surrogate spouse and made to feel responsible for fulfilling the abusive parent's emotional and physical needs (Courtois, 1988; Hunter, 1990). The psychological impact on the child, and we would make a similar argument in the case of adult survivors, is confusion about appropriate sexual relations and identity, aversion to sex and intimacy as a result of traumatic conditioning, and the false association between sex and caregiving/ caregetting. We discuss the perpetrating clergyman's explicit use of God to leverage sexual exploitation later in this paper, but the implicit power of the clerical role, even if it is never explicitly invoked during CPSA events, cannot be overstated.

As reviewed previously, there is strong anecdotal evidence and qualitative data to support the hypothesis that the inherent power of the



clergyman's role is a salient variable in any sexual relationship with parishioners. This evidence highlights the exploitive and abusive nature of these relationships even when the survivors are adults at the time of the abuse. An important next step in this line of research is to continue to document similarities and differences between CPSA survivors and other types of survivors of exploitive relationships. For example, one new direction in this literature might be to document the patterns of symptoms that are present in CPSA survivors (e.g., PTSD) and to compare these symptoms to the symptom profiles of survivors of incest or other exploitive relationships. In this way, it will be possible to determine if recovery from CPSA, or lack thereof, follows a similar trajectory to recovery from other types of abuse of power. Similarly, it might be useful to begin to evaluate the cognitions of CPSA survivors in a systematic way to determine whether cognitions that are consistent with entrapment and accommodation are present. There are already established measures such as the Personal Beliefs and Reactions Scale (Resick, Schnicke, & Markway, 1991) that might be useful in this regard. Given that these constructs are central to some types of empirically supported psychotherapy (e.g., Cognitive Processing Therapy), we would expect that they would also be applicable to the evidence-based treatment of CPSA survivors. Moreover, measures of internalized hopelessness (e.g., Pearlin & Schooler, 1987) would be important to gather, as well as thorough evaluations of how the experience was framed by the clergyman during the abuse. To validate our model's specific assertion that CPSA is an abuse of role and power, we would expect to see evidence that pastors framed the experience of abuse as "being good for you" or otherwise consonant with pastoral guidance and counseling.

Perpetrators and Survivors: The Use of God to Leverage Sexual Exploitation

Farrell and Taylor's (2000) paper described how some CPSA perpetrators incorporate a distorted representation of a punitive, all-seeing God into their grooming of potential victims. According to this model, secrecy and silence are the core constructs that perpetuate the CPSA relationship. While secrecy and silence are not specific to this type of abuse, the strategy employed to obtain silence and secrecy may be different. Perpetrators may foster the feeling of being singled out for a special relationship with the perpetrator by God. In some cases, the feeling may be perpetuated by material rewards of gifts and special treatment by the perpetrator and/or

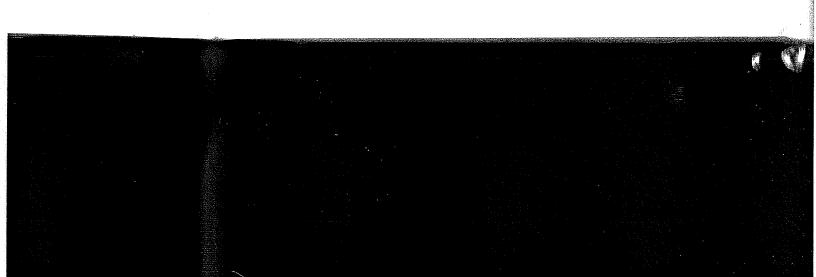
ny sexual relationship with xploitive and abusive nature s are adults at the time of the esearch is to continue to doc-CPSA survivors and other ps. For example, one new ent the patterns of symptoms ISD) and to compare these ors of incest or other exploible to determine if recovery trajectory to recovery from might be useful to begin to i a systematic way to detervith entrapment and accomlished measures such as the ck, Schnicke, & Markway, that these constructs are cen-/chotherapy (e.g., Cognitive ≥y would also be applicable rivors. Moreover, measures Schooler, 1987) would be uations of how the experihe abuse. To validate our suse of role and power, we ied the experience of abuse ant with pastoral guidance

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Many church practices and customs become incorporated into this comprehensive silencing strategy. For example, absolute respect for all church leaders and officials can be manipulated to prevent defiance, disclosure, and escape. Secrecy is also highlighted in Summit's CSAAS model, in which secrecy is predicated on the child internalizing the perpetrator's threat that bad outcomes will happen if outsiders learn about the sexually abusive relationship. The negative outcome can be infliction of physical violence or public shame on the child or his or her loved ones, withdrawal of the perpetrator's positive attention, breakdown in the integrity and security of the home or parish (e.g., "They'll arrest me, you'll be taken away from your family, and your mother will be devastated"), or a combination of these. The frequent end result is the survivor acting in the role of co-conspirator to conceal his or her own abuse (Berliner & Conte, 1990; Furniss, 1991; German, Habenicht, & Futcher, 1990). Psychiatric symptoms and dysregulated behavior arise from the survivor's inner struggle to hold and make sense of contradictory messages in silence (e.g., "God is good, yet God is letting me be hurt" or "My pastor is kind and good, yet he hurts me").

We cannot draw on the extant literature to examine the concept of use of God to leverage sexual exploitation because the concepts are specific to CPSA. Thus, it is important for research to develop measures that specifically tap these and other unique facets of CPSA. Among the important dimensions that one might assess are the theological, existential, and spiritual domains both of the abuse itself and as part of the subsequent recovery. Farrell and Taylor (2000) described these domains in considerable



detail and offer a helpful blueprint for how they might be operationalized. For example, the theological domain addresses survivors' difficulty reconciling abuse with the church's teachings, the existential domain survivors' damaged sense of life having value and meaning, and the spiritual domain survivors' feelings of losing God as a source of comfort and strength. In addition, qualitative analyses can begin to uncover the factors that are most relevant to maintaining silence and secrecy.

Perpetrators and Survivors: Betrayal, Powerlessness, and Damaged Self-Concept

Several models (Finkelhor & Browne, 1986; Summit, 1983) describe the corrosive power of sexual abuse on children's sense of self-worth, ability to trust that adults will keep them safe, and growing sense of powerlessness. Perpetrators can initiate this corrosive process by normalizing abnormal, developmentally inappropriate, often frightening sexual relations between a perpetrator and survivor. Learning to trust is an important milestone of psychosocial development that can be corrupted by CPSA (Erickson, 1950). The quotes of CPSA survivors are illustrative: "I would say as a child, I learned not to trust adults" and "[CPSA] destroys everything about how [children] feel about adults and about what sex did . . . to them" (Bera, 1995; p. 88). When the process of learning how to trust is disrupted by violence perpetrated by a caregiver or trusted adult, problems in psychological growth are likely to emerge (Herman, 1992). Some authors note that providers can expect to see hostility and other forms of disrupted attachment (e.g., clinginess), as well as dysregulated behavior.

These same concepts are also present in adult victims of CPSA, who often begin to question their own judgments about people to place faith in and/or trust. Similarly, this difficulty with trust is common in cases of intimate partner violence, where women sometimes lose all confidence in their ability to determine who is trustworthy and/or an appropriate partner. This process has been detailed in various models, including McFall's (1982) Social Information Processing Model, and may have direct relevance for adult women who are survivors of CPSA.

Powerlessness, another traumagenic dynamic, comes from the abuse-instilled sense that, "... nothing about me was mine. Everything about me belonged to someone else" (Bera, 1995, p. 89). The desperate need for mastery over something in the face of complete violation drives some children toward revictimization, sexualized behavior, aggression, and running away (see Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993, for

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prevalence statistics for these behaviors). A recent structural equation modeling study provided empirical support for the powerlessness and stigmatization dynamics mediating the effects of child sexual abuse severity on psychological distress in adult women (Kallstrom-Fuqua, Weston, & Marshall, 2004).

Self Discrepancy Theory is similar to the construct of powerlessness in that it can help to explain some of the interactive dynamics in CPSA relationships (Higgins, 1987, 1989b). Higgins proposed that perceived discrepancies between one's actual and ideal self-concept (actual-ideal discrepancy) will lead to depressed affect, whereas discrepancies between one's actual self and externally imposed standards for how one ought to be (actual-ought discrepancy) would lead to agitated, socially anxious feelings. Self-Discrepancy Theory seems particularly applicable to CPSA for a number of reasons. First, the construct resonates with anecdotal observations that some individuals refer to themselves as "good" or "bad" depending on how much they perceive themselves to be adhering to religious practices. Second, Higgins (1989a) proposed that the development of self-concept and the capacity to perceive discrepancies between the actual, ideal, and ought selves is developmentally mediated, specifically by Piagetian stages of cognitive development. Within this context, a wide range of behaviors from CPSA survivors are explainable. For example, if victimized boys are socialized to be tough and never to be a victim (Bolton, Morris, & MacEachron, 1989), then the CPSA survivor should be especially likely to experience actual-ought discrepancies that will lead to agitation and the disruptive behaviors that tend to bring them into treatment. Conversely, it would be beneficial to know if the higher rates of internalizing disorders in female children following trauma correspond to higher rates of actual-ideal discrepancy (Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993).

Fortunately, for those interested in examining these elements of betrayal, powerlessness, and self-concept in the role of CPSA, there are several studies to use as a foundation. For example, replication of Kallstrom-Fuqua and colleague's (2004) study using a sample of CPSA survivors could help to determine if powerlessness and stigma are mediating factors in the relationship between CPSA and psychological distress, as they are with other types of abuse. Similarly, it would be possible to examine self-discrepancies in CPSA survivors using Strauman and Higgins' (1988) methodology in a sample of CPSA survivors. Thus, the process of documenting the importance of betrayal, powerlessness, and self-concepts in CPSA are ripe for examination.



Perpetrators and Survivors: Predatory Clergy

Predatory clergymen are a small but clinically significant subgroup of perpetrating clergy. This type of perpetrator may be different from other types of perpetrating clergy in a number of quantitatively measurable ways, but from our perspective they qualitatively stand apart due to their apparently ego-syntonic antisociality and their remorseless willingness to use physical threats and aggression to satisfy their sexual needs. Evidence for this separate category of perpetrator is suggested by the fact that Hall and Hirschman's (1991) Quadripartite Model of Sexual Aggression fits the profile of nearly one-third of the alleged perpetrating priests detailed in the National Clergy Sex Abuse Report (NCSAR; The John Jay College Research Team, 2004) remarkably well, but we stress: only one-third. As reported in the NCSAR (p. 39), 12% of 1,400 priests had documented histories of civil or criminal offenses, nearly 8% had documented problems with hostility, with an additional 26.5% for other personality-related problems, and nearly 4% had documented problems with coercive sex or "other sexual behavior." The NCSAR additionally reported that 13% of perpetrating priests had documented histories of being disciplined for having sex with adult partners, which for unknown reasons has been differentiated from the "coercive sex" category. Without survivor reports, we have no way to determine how much of this 13% is accounted for by truly "consensual" sexual relationships and how much may be best described as sexual misconduct as we described earlier. Given the power imbalance between clergy and parishioners, we must view with suspicion the possibility of any of these relationships being consensual.

One potential risk factor of sexually abusive behavior is the perpetrator's own history of being sexually abused. Meta-analyses reveal that 66% ($\eta^2 = .43$) of sexual abuse survivors showed developmentally inappropriate sexualized behavior, but not necessarily behavior that was sexually aggressive (Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993). The NCSAR found that a minority of accused priests (7%) endorsed a history of being abused themselves (n = 274). Of these 274 priests, the majority (65%) reported that they were sexually abused, and a smaller group (7%) endorsed being both sexually and physically abused. These data suggest that there may be a minority of individuals for whom violence and sexuality are inextricably linked. Unfortunately, this is true for a small subset of individuals in all walks of life. In cases where these individuals enter the ministry or other professions where they have authority over others, the results can be

destructive to individuals with lesser authority.

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y significant subgroup of y be different from other quantitatively measurable y stand apart due to their emorseless willingness to ir sexual needs. Evidence sted by the fact that Hall f Sexual Aggression fits petrating priests detailed R; The John Jay College stress: only one-third. As ests had documented hisid documented problems other personality-related ms with coercive sex or lly reported that 13% of of being disciplined for vn reasons has been difithout survivor reports, 13% is accounted for by w much may be best earlier. Given the power nust view with suspicion consensual.

hehavior is the perpetraeta-analyses reveal that I developmentally inapbehavior that was sexute NCSAR found that a istory of being abused najority (65%) reported up (7%) endorsed being tegest that there may be sexuality are inextricasubset of individuals in s enter the ministry or thers, the results can be In order to test this element of the model, specifically that predatory clergy are a unique subset of perpetrators, an assessment of motivational precursors to the abuse must be assessed. For example, it would ideally be possible to determine if clergymen experience sexual arousal to images of violence or degradation of women and/or children using empirical techniques such as the Barlow Strain Gauge (Barlow, Becker, Leitenberg, & Agras, 1970). Although certainly not a perfectly reliable method of testing, in combination with personality tests for sociopathy, emotion regulation difficulties (e.g., outbursts of anger), and careful clinical interviewing, it may be possible to document this profile.

Understanding the relationship between the perpetrator and survivor is critical to the understanding any type of abuse. We have outlined four mechanisms that can assist us in our understanding of this theme in CPSA. The abuse of power is inherently present in all cases of sexual abuse committed by clergy. This power dynamic is often complicated by the introduction of God, either overtly or covertly, into the abuse situation due to the clergyman's position in the community. These particular themes found in CPSA can profoundly impact a survivor's self-concept. Finally, the influence of predatory clergymen, although a minority of offenders, cannot be overestimated due to the callous and repeated incidences of their behavior.

THEME 2: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SURVIVORS AND COMMUNITIES

The second theme examines the relationship between the survivor and the community in CPSA. Many authors describe how the experience of sexual violation in CPSA is compounded by rumor, scandal, and the withdrawal of social support within religious communities once the trauma is disclosed (Cooper-White, 1991; Fortune, 1989; Francis & Turner, 1995; Rediger, 1990). The result is an increasing sense of isolation from what used to be a safe haven. We postulate three factors that may contribute to the development and perpetuation of distress and impaired functioning for survivors, including the impact of others' disbelief, the role of shame, and community exclusion.

Survivors and Communities: The Impact of Others' Disbelief

According to Summit (1983), delayed, unconvincing disclosure is conceptualized as the behavioral consequence of three interactive processes.

First, the survivor may have been socialized to keep the abusive relationship secret to avoid catastrophe (as described earlier). Second, the survivor may feel helpless to change the situation. Third, perhaps to feel less helpless, the survivor may have convinced himself or herself that he or she can modulate the abuser's behavior by "being good." Under these conditions, the survivor will be unlikely to disclose, much less in a way that is convincing to fellow parishioners. Understandably, parishioners may collude with the survivor's unconvincing disclosure because they do not want to believe that such disturbing things can happen in "nice neighborhoods," parishes, or congregations.

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Summit (1983) further conceptualizes survivor retraction as the behavioral manifestation of ambivalence: wanting to escape but feeling responsible for the welfare of loved ones. In the survivor's mind, this sense of responsibility is predicated on imagining that they need to keep the abuse secret in order to spare their loved ones from scandal and pain. A recent retrospective study of CSA survivors did not support the assertion that children make unconvincing disclosures or retract them, although it is important to note that delayed disclosure appeared to be normative (London, Bruck, Ceci, & Shuman, 2005). Nonetheless, Isely and Isely (1990) strongly recommended that those who might provide services for a child survivor of CPSA explore Summit's model and its utility for conceptualizing survivors' behavior.

Disclosing sexual abuse should ideally be considered a "cry for help" that leads to rescue of the survivor and corrective action toward the perpetrator. Disclosure is a vulnerable time for the survivor, and the response of their religious communities can alter or exacerbate their sense of worldview dissonance. A number of authors have described the strongly patriarchal culture of organized Christianity (Fishburn, 1982; Franz, 2002; Lothstein, 2002; Thoburn & Whitman, 2004) and used this to explain how it could create an atmosphere in which the presumed moral authority of the priest or minister is used to override the allegations and concerns of relatively disempowered groups, namely women and children. Children in particular are vulnerable to having their sense of right and wrong dictated by powerful adults. However, for survivors of all ages, disquieting dissonance is created when the clergyman, who defines morality for oneself, one's parents, and one's community, is also a perpetrator. We know that sexual abuse affects not only the survivor but also the people close to the survivor. The survivors' significant others may struggle to understand the changes in their loved one as a result of the abuse and to reconcile their feelings toward the perpetrator. Feelings of shock, confusion, and divided loyalty are common reactions in families in

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which incest has occurred (Courtois, 1988), and to the extent that religious communities have features in common with families, these reactions may also be applicable to CPSA. Fortune (1989) poignantly described six women's reports of feeling betrayed and ostracized by their church after they disclosed that their pastor sexually abused them. The words of one woman interviewed by Fortune are particularly powerful:

It does pain me . . . that a number of people that I have known for many years, have worked with, have considered to be my friends, have chosen to blame the women for "chasing after [our pastor]," or have lightly dismissed the whole issue with remarks like "boys will be boys," despite the overwhelming evidence that [our pastor] was asked to leave two (and possibly five) churches for similar incidents of sexual misconduct. On the other hand, I understand [our pastor's] tremendous power of persuasion and intimidation—and probably we must share some of the guilt for letting this kind of situation persist for so long a time. (p. 95, our emphasis)

In addition to this passage highlighting how community disbelief can manifest in cases of CPSA, it is notable that Fortune's respondent to some degree internalizes blame for her victimization.

From a research perspective, it is important to be able to document the importance of responses to disclosure in recovery from CPSA. Qualitative data such as that collected by Fortune provide an excellent example of how these important research questions can be addressed. While it seems logical that community reaction to disclosure would be an important facet of recovery, this has not been examined directly with quantitative data in CPSA survivors. Using the Summit (1983) model, the retrospective research conducted by London and colleagues (2005) and Courtois' (1988) incest research as a guide, it may be possible to apply methods used with survivors of other types of abuse to the CPSA population. Additionally, development of CPSA—specific measures may assist in this type of research endeavor in the future.

Survivors and Communities: The Role of Shame

Shame may be an important mediating emotion in the potentially adversarial interaction between survivors and their religious communities. Proneness to experiencing shame has been found to be an important predictor of a variety of mental health outcomes in survivors of sexual



abuse, usually accounting for additional variance beyond abuse severity (Andrews, Brewin, Rose, & Kirk, 2000; Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 2000; Kessler & Bieschke, 1999; Talbot, Talbot, & Tu, 2004). In these studies, shame is defined as the desire to hide, disappear, or die due to feeling defective, often as the result of failing to meet one's own or others' internalized standards (Tangney, 1995). It is highly likely that this construct would be applicable to CPSA, given that churches are such powerful definers and enforcers of moral behavior. Shame is believed to be a fundamental motivator of "proper behavior," as when children are told that "God is watching" what they do, say, and think. The implicit assumption is that shame is so aversive to the person experiencing it that he or she will inhibit behaviors that would bring others' disapproval in the future.

However, one study suggests that high shame proneness may actually be a predictor of increased "wrongdoing." In a longitudinal study, fifth graders who were highly shame prone (measured by forced-choice responses to descriptions of moral dilemmas) had a significantly higher frequency of drug use and suspensions at age 18–19 than their less shame prone peers (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Should this finding be replicated, it would suggest that highly shame prone survivors, and perhaps perpetrators, of CPSA would be especially likely to be trapped in an escalating negative spiral of abuse and destructive behavior. Shame may therefore be especially destructive in religious communities, where the survivor is made to feel simultaneously deserving of the abuse by the perpetrator and ostracized by the congregation for "falsely" accusing a beloved pastor. We explore the possible self-preserving motivations for ostracizing a survivor in the community exclusion section below.

In terms of empirical support, a next logical step in applying the research on shame to the CPSA population would be to replicate studies documenting the importance of this construct. Thus, it may be possible to document the importance of shame in terms of revictimization or maladaptive coping behaviors (e.g., substance abuse) in survivors of CPSA. Similarly, it would be important to determine if mental health outcomes are impacted by the presence of shame using similar methods to studies with other survivor populations (Andrews et al., 2000; Feiring et al., 2000; Kessler & Bieschke, 1999; Talbot et al., 2004).

Survivors and Communities: Community Exclusion

Rather than receiving acceptance and support from their communities, survivors of CPSA often report being excluded or ostracized by members

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t from their communities, or ostracized by members

of their community (see Neustein & Lesher, 2008). One rather severe example of exclusion in religious communities is "disfellowshipping" among Jehovah's Witnesses, in which an entire congregation, including blood relatives, will shun a congregant for various sins, including divorce, adultery, and "provocative dancing" (e.g., see silentlambs.org, n.d.). Terror Management Theory (TMT; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1997) may help explain this rejecting response by communities. TMT proposes that the fear of death, or "mortality salience," drives many social phenomena related to the preservation of self- and worldview. To simplify, no one likes to consider their own mortality. As such, people comfort themselves by creating a sense of safety through their social routines and beliefs. During times of physical or psychological threat, an individual's need for this sense of security increases, leading them to hold more steadfastly to their beliefs. In fact, when people are primed to think about their own mortality (using death-related words embedded in experimental tasks) they tend to reward people who agree with their worldview and punish those who do not. In other words, people tend to "derogate and punish those who violate cultural standards" as a method of reacting to their own mortality (Leary & Schreindorfer, 1997, p. 27; see also McGregor et al., 1998). TMT is a potential mediator in the relationship between a survivor disclosing abuse and the often victimblaming, ostracizing stance taken by the religious community toward the survivor (e.g., Fortune, 1989; Francis & Turner, 1995; Isely, 1996). A number of TMT-informed studies have connected mortality salience to constructs that we believe are highly relevant to CPSA, such as attitudes toward sexuality (Goldenberg, Pyszczynski, McCoy, Greenberg, & Solomon, 1999), sex as a moral transgression (Rosenblatt, Greenberg, Solomon, Pyszczynski, & Lyon, 1989), group membership (Greenberg et al., 1990), and individuals who violate or criticize group norms (Dechesne, Janssen, & van Knippenberg, 2000). Further suggestive evidence that TMT would be applicable to CPSA is that the relationship between mortality salience and condemnation of moral transgressions appears to be generalizable across intrapersonal and interpersonal crimes (Florian & Mikulincer, 1997). In other words, mortality salience not only impels direct attacks on an individual for suspected moral transgressions, but also secondary harm to the wounded party's significant others and community.

To the extent that a survivor who discloses CPSA is seen as a critic of or threat to the religious community, derogation and condemnation is a very understandable outcome within the TMT framework. It is certainly



easier to condemn a single "deviant"/outgroup member than to question the goodness of the clergyman who represents the entire religious community. This may be especially true for highly cloistered communities, such as the Amish, in which the church handles nearly all disputes and legal matters, including serious crimes (Pinto, 2004).

There are several studies of the central elements of TMT utilizing basic experimental paradigms. However, these constructs have not yet been examined directly in CPSA survivors and the community exclusion experienced by many of these survivors. A next important step would then be to test the effects of priming mortality awareness on behaviors and attitudes with both survivors and communities that have been impacted by CPSA. Clearly an important variable to assess in this type of experimentation would be the perceived permeability of group boundaries in religious communities.

Considering the central role the clergyman plays in the religious community and the importance of the community as a support for survivors, understanding the relationship between the survivor and the community is particularly important in CPSA. We have outlined three mechanisms that can assist in understanding this theme in CPSA. The impact of community disbelief when survivors recount their abuse is repeatedly noted and often closely linked to the experience of survivors' shame. In many cases, particularly in closed religious communities, survivors are deliberately excluded or shunned from institutions that were previously of central importance in their lives.

THEME 3: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLERGYPERSON AND COMMUNITY

The third theme examines the relationship between clergyman and the community. In some respects, this is both the most ambitious and most tentative theme presented. Most authors who examine CPSA examine only limited aspects of the phenomenon and generally do not discuss perpetrators and survivors in the same paper. However, this is an initial attempt to provide an interactive dynamic model that accounts for the multiple layers that contribute to CPSA. Three themes are detailed: community ambivalence toward the perpetrator, cognitive style, and cognitive adaptability.

Clergymen and Community: Ambivalence Toward the Perpetrator

The literature about religious communities' reactions to disclosed abuse suggests that ambivalence toward perpetrating clergymen is common.

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As in other forms of sexual abuse, reactions to disclosure seem to vary. One extreme response is a denial of the allegations coupled with a desire to protect the accused priest (e.g., Richards, 2004). The opposite extreme response includes a strong punitive demand for "zero tolerance," whereas a more moderate response can include a hopeful plea for rehabilitation (see e.g., McConnaha, 2002). An area of study that has direct relevance to this area is the literature concerning sexual misconduct perpetrated by an "impaired professional" (e.g., Layman & McNamara, 1997). Schoener and Gonsiorek (1988) identified six types of impaired psychotherapists who engage in sexual misconduct, ranging from the highly treatable and help-seeking "mildly neurotic" type to severely character-disordered types who lack remorse and are unlikely to benefit from treatment. Francis and Turner (1995) applied a very similar typology to clergy engaging in sexual misconduct, distinguishing between temporarily impaired, naïve, and "educable" clergymen and "those who have a world view that says they are entitled to have their needs met at the expense of others and may have to leave the clergy because of personality disorders" (p. 218). The degree to which sexual misconduct by clergy is pathologized or viewed as a training issue may vary even within the same denomination. For example, in one northeastern Episcopal diocese, seminarians in their final stages of training before ordination are supervised and evaluated on their progress in developing good pastoral boundaries, where failure to develop these boundaries may be grounds for termination from training (anonymous Episcopal postulant "A," personal communication, July 25, 2005). At the same time, it is not uncommon for Episcopal seminarians to hear their instructors speculate that sexual misconduct is a remediable condition arising from being overworked and overstressed (anonymous Episcopal postulant "B," personal communication, July 14, 2005).

Community ambivalence toward a clergyperson who has been accused of CPSA is a difficult construct to examine. This construct is difficult to examine in part due to the range of responses that might be present within one faith community. Each individual within the community may have a different reaction, whereas the community response is typically either an average of these responses or is characterized by a few vocal community members who may or may not represent the majority in the community. However, careful qualitative assessment may be the key to documenting a phenomenon that is often discussed anecdotally as being an important variable in communities that are coping with this type of accusation. Toward this end, we recommend the use of Grounded Theory, a rigorous method of extracting and testing constructs found in qualitative data

(e.g., Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Only through thorough examination of the dynamic processes that occur between clergymen and their communities of faith can we begin to understand the ways in which these communities can begin to heal. In addition, by understanding underlying motives for perpetration and factors that allow CPSA to occur can we develop effective training and preventative programs.

Clergymen and Community: Cognitive Style

It is important when trying to understand the interactions of perpetrating clergymen with victims and the larger community that we consider the internal motivations and rationalizations for inappropriate behavior. For example, the Thought–Action–Fusion theoretical model (Steketee & Barlow, 2002) is one model that can help us understand a perpetrator's cognitive style. This model refers to the irrational belief that having a thought or urge is equivalent to performing the behavior and/or that thoughts increase the likelihood of a behavior's occurrence. Interestingly, there is a body of research that demonstrates that high levels of thought-action-fusion are present in individuals who identify themselves as highly religious (Rassin & Koster, 2003). In essence, this correlation suggests that highly religious individuals are more likely to believe that having a "sinful" thought is equivalent to perpetrating a "sinful" action or behavior.

Thought-action-fusion could be an important mediating variable in CPSA on several levels. Initially, it may be a factor in the clergyman's decision making to perpetrate. For example, they might believe themselves "damned" for having thoughts about perpetrating. Therefore, there would be no additional consequence for acting on these thoughts given that they believe that having the thoughts and urges are equivalent to acting on these feelings. Similarly, the congregation may reject a clergyman who is seeking assistance to resist thoughts or urges based on the belief that having thoughts are equivalent to actions. We hypothesize that thought-action-fusion is encouraged in some faiths and internalized by some clergymen, survivors, and congregants. Awareness of this tendency toward thought-action-fusion coupled with honest communication between communities and clergymen could potentially provide a method of primary prevention of CPSA in the future and warrants further study.

There would be several ways to document if cognitive style is an important facet of the relationship of the clergyman to the community.

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Further exploration of the "actual-ought" discrepancy as it relates to the perpetrator's behavior would be important. Additionally, several possible studies could help to elucidate the role of thought-action-fusion as a possible precursor for abuse as well as a moderator of recovery.

Clergymen and Community: Cognitive Adaptability

Excluding the small proportion of sociopathic clergymen discussed earlier, the clinical literature suggests that perpetrating clergymen are conflicted about their behavior and motivations (e.g., Fones, Levine, Althof, & Risen, 1999). Indeed, they may be experiencing actual-ought discrepancy as described by Higgins (1987, 1989b) and discussed earlier in our section on "Perpetrators and Survivors: Betrayal, Powerlessness, and Damaged Self-Concept." Considering this, it would not be surprising that accused clergymen (and their congregations) would want to believe that they can gain control over their sexually compulsive behavior and resume their clerical duties, whether or not they actually can.²

TMT may also provide a means of understanding the cognitive adaptations made by perpetrating clergy on being discovered and accused. TMT suggests that an allegation of sexual misconduct is a powerful enough threat to one's symbolic life to activate the mechanisms of psychological self-preservation. In TMT, such a cognitive adaptation occurs largely outside of conscious awareness, but it would be as if the accused clergyman—and the devout parishioner—followed this line of thought:

Clergy who sexually abuse parishioners are monsters and deserve punishment. For a clergyman, these punishments—excommunication, being "defrocked," etc.—are the functional equivalent of being killed, and this terrifies me. In order to survive as a clergyman/parishioner, I/my clergyman must be capable of changing, and I/my clergyman have done enough good in my/his life that I believe that I am/my clergyman is different from those "other" sexually abusive clergy. My/my clergyman's case is different.

One way to test if such a cognitive adaptation occurs is to see whether measures of belief in one's rehabilitation positively correlate with other measures of rehabilitation. We must note here that we are not judging the veracity of perpetrating clergy's assertions that they can be helped but rather suggesting a psychological mechanism that could impel such assertions

(and parishioners' desire to believe them), as well as a possible method to test this element of our theoretical model.

DISCUSSION

We have proposed a dynamic interactive model of CPSA that primarily focuses on the relationships between survivors, perpetrators, and their religious communities. We acknowledge that this interactive dynamic model is a complex one that would require extensive research to determine if the assertions are supported. However, we believe that this model can provide a foundation for future investigations. This model integrates the relatively small literature on CPSA with some of the more extensive literature on sexual trauma perpetrated by nonclergy. By using this broader framework as a base, we have attempted to provide an empirically testable model that also includes examples of supporting evidence where possible. While the possible research suggested throughout this manuscript is not meant to be exhaustive, we are hopeful that it will spur continued interest in this highly important phenomenon. Overall, we would argue for the continued need for qualitative research that has dominated the field of CPSA research to date. This research has predominately focused on the statements of survivors, thus we would argue for more in-depth qualitative research on the perpetrators and communities affected by CPSA. In this way, we can begin to examine this interactive set of dynamics.

In addition to qualitative studies, quantitative study is needed in this field. Fortunately, there are several related trauma-focused studies that can inform this literature. Wherever possible, drawing on the experience and knowledge of the extant literature would be important. For example, replicating some of the studies mentioned throughout this manuscript with populations of CPSA survivors, perpetrators, and communities would be important first steps for this literature. However, we also recognize that there is a need for specialized measurement tools for fully understanding this phenomenon. Therefore, we would encourage the development and validation of specialized assessment tools that tap some of the unique spiritual and philosophical domains of CPSA. Indeed, the problem of CPSA is a complex one that is not easily understood or solved. Nonetheless, we are hopeful that this comprehensive volume and the empirical and clinical work that might be stimulated from it will be rigorous and well-informed.

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NOTES

- 1. Hall and Hirschman (1991) propose that four "motivational precursors" (p. 662) increase the likelihood of sexual aggression: physiological sexual arousal (sometimes associated with extremely inappropriate stimuli, such as children or violence); justifying cognitions (e.g., "women want or deserve to be raped"); affective dyscontrol (e.g., anger and hostility); and personality problems, particularly antisociality.
- 2. There is a literature on the rehabilitation of sexual offenders that is beyond the scope of this paper. Readers are referred to the work of McGrath (1991) and Hanson and Bussière (1998).

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